

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Jane Lee Gabriel

Jane Lee Gabriel, daughter of Korean immigrants, Sun Yei Lee and Bong Hee Lee, was born in Lāna‘i City, Lāna‘i in 1933. Her father, Sun Yei Lee, was employed as a field *luna* by the Hawaiian Pineapple Company. Her mother, Bong Hee Lee, took in laundry from Korean bachelors employed by the Hawaiian Pineapple Company. Her parents supported a family that included six children.

As a youth, Jane Gabriel helped her mother with the laundry, worked in the pineapple fields in the summers, babysat and house-cleaned for the island’s Caucasian residents.

She and her family were active in the Korean community. She attended Korean-language classes and the Korean Methodist Church.

A 1951 graduate of Lāna‘i High and Elementary School, she lived for short periods of time on O‘ahu.

Married to John Gabriel since 1954, she raised four daughters.

For many years, she worked for the public library and the welfare office on Lāna‘i.

Retired since 1993, Jane Lee Gabriel is grandmother to seven and great-grandmother to six.

Tape No. 56-30-1-13

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Jane Lee Gabriel (JG)

Lānaʻi City, Lānaʻi

March 28, 2013

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: Okay, today is March 28, 2013 and we're interviewing Jane Lee Gabriel in Lānaʻi City. And the interviewer is Warren Nishimoto. So good morning.

JG: Hi, Warren.

WN: Can I call you "Jane"? (Chuckles) Okay, thank you. So first question that I want to ask you is when you were born and where were you born?

JG: I was born in the Lānaʻi hospital, 1933.

WN: Okay, and then if you could tell me something about your father [Sun Yei Lee]—what was he doing here on Lānaʻi and prior to being on Lānaʻi?

JG: I really don't know when he came from Korea, but he did work on the Big Island. And he moved to Lānaʻi, actually, to marry my mother, now that I think about it. My mother [Bong Hee Lee] was a widow in Kalihi [Oʻahu]. So she moved here, and they got married. You know, *shinpai* kind. And they had my brother, then me, then two younger brothers.

WN: So your father immigrated from Korea.

JG: Yeah.

WN: Do you know what part—where in Korea he's from?

JG: My mother was from Pusan. I don't know where my father was, but he used to tell us stories about him running away from home. He would travel to India even. He was the adventurous kind. You know, cannot keep still, young—*kolohe* probably. He said he rode an elephant. I believe him because he never lied. He was very strict about us lying. Unreal, you know, his stories.

WN: Do you know what kind of economic background your father came from in Korea?

JG: I don't.

WN: I mean, were they, you know, wealthy or anything like that?

- JG: Probably not. Oh, I have a family history—kind of loose—that my younger brother tried to start. He went to Korea a couple of times to talk to our aunties and uncles. He kind of documented everything. I can give it to you after.
- WN: Oh yeah, I would like to see it.
- JG: I mean, it's just to find out some sort of background. My father, I really don't know about his family.
- WN: So he came from Korea and started on the Big Island. You're not sure where on the Big Island, yeah, you told me.
- JG: No. He even told me the name of the ship and I forgot.
- WN: So he was on the Big Island—by himself, do you know? Or did he come with someone?
- JG: I suppose, this was his first marriage to my mom. I don't know.
- WN: Okay. So tell me about your mom. What is her background?
- JG: Oh, my mom. I think my mom was fairly—I think she was educated. I don't think they were rich, but she did come to Hawai'i to make a better life, I guess. I don't know. She came from Pusan.
- WN: Did she come by herself or did she come with her parents?
- JG: No, she was by herself, and she became good friends with this other passenger, who is the matriarch of Joe Kim's Kim Chee company [Theresa Soo Chun Kim]. They were such close friends. She lived in Kalihi. Mrs. Kim married, and my mother married a Kim also. But he died and she had two children. She had to work in the banana patch, too, to help support them.
- WN: Where was the banana patch?
- JG: Kalihi Valley. And then she moved to Lāna'i and married my father.
- WN: Okay. And did she also help with the *kimchi* factory?
- JG: I don't know, at that time, what she did after.
- WN: Oh, I see. And when you say matriarch of the Joe Kim Kim Chee [company], does that mean . . .
- JG: It was like a dynasty. They were the only ones that made *kimchi*, and they had huge cabbage gardens. Harvested all the cabbage and the vegetables.
- WN: So Mrs. Kim, in essence, married Joe Kim—the *kimchi* maker. That was her husband.
- JG: Joe was the son.
- WN: Oh, the son!
- JG: Mrs. Kim's husband could've been [named] Joseph. I'm not sure.
- WN: I see. But the Joe Kim who started the *kimchi* company was the son of this woman.

JG: But maybe this woman's husband was Joe too. And that's how the name Joe Kim's Kim Chee—I don't know.

WN: I see.

JG: But Joe, the son, was the oldest in the family, and he kind of took over the business.

WN: I see, I see.

JG: Nice family.

WN: Now, did your mom live over there with them in Kalihi?

JG: At that time? I don't know. Then, as I told you—I don't know if you remember, but she was here on Lāna'i. My brother talked to her about moving to Honolulu so she could earn some money and enough quarters for social security. So she worked at Joe Kim's—she went to live with Mrs. Kim, her friend. She roomed and board there every week—came home on weekends. I mean, went home to Honolulu on weekends. But she stayed with Mrs. Kim and the family. She lived there.

WN: And how old were you when she did that?

JG: I was nineteen.

WN: Nineteen. Okay.

JG: I think, nineteen.

WN: So, what, this is like 1950s then?

JG: My mother had to earn enough by the time she was sixty-two or sixty-five. But she left early, and I was left to take care of my father who was already sick. My brother, he worked for the agriculture department for Dole Corporation—Hawaiian Pineapple Company, at that time. He stayed here after he graduated for about three years. Then he moved to Honolulu. He earned enough money to go to the university. He became a doctor of entomology. Well, he got his degree on the Mainland someplace, and he lived in Canada for a long time. Then he moved back to Hawai'i.

WN: So going back to your parents. They eventually ended up on Lāna'i. They got married and then they moved to Lāna'i.

JG: They got married here, I'm presuming.

WN: Well, they came here and they got married here.

JG: From the Big Island, my father came. My mother came from Kalihi.

WN: Do you know how they met?

JG: *Shinpai*, I think.

WN: Oh, so arranged from their parents?

- JG: Yeah, arranged from some kind of group they had here because a lot of men came single. Came to Hawai‘i singly. And a lot of women—they were all young. So my mother came to Lāna‘i with two children already—my sister and my oldest brother [Ke Nam Kim]. Then, they had my brother Robert, then me, and two other boys.
- WN: So she came with two—your stepbrother and stepsister.
- JG: Yeah.
- WN: And then, Robert was born in [19]31 and you were born in [19]33, yeah?
- JG: Mm-hmm [yes].
- WN: And then, two more came after you.
- JG: I think, about two or three died in between. You know how you don’t go to a doctor when you’re pregnant? They just worked and worked. You had your children, you go back to work.
- WN: Right.
- JG: Two died stillborn. One died a few months after he was born—Jacob. But I think, at that time, a lot of families had children that did not survive. It was a hard time.
- WN: So tell me about your father—what kind of work did your father do here on Lāna‘i while you were growing up?
- JG: He was a *luna* in the fields.
- WN: And what did that entail? What did a *luna* have to do?
- JG: He’s a foreman of a gang—the group of workers.
- WN: Mm-hmm [yes]. This is like out on the fields?
- JG: Yeah. Pineapple fields.
- WN: Pineapple. So he was the *luna*. And where did you folks live, growing up?
- JG: We lived on the northern side of this whole town [Lāna‘i City]. I remember, we had a three-bedroom home. The company owned the whole city. They owned all the homes and stuff. And they sent workers to trim hedges. We had a fence around our yard. Everybody had ‘*ākulikuli*’ plants along their sidewalk. It was a wooden sidewalk with slats. I think, once every month or every two months, a truck would come around to pass out kerosene because we all had kerosene stoves. So we would pull a wagon with the empty kerosene gallons and fill up kerosene.
- WN: So they would provide the kerosene for you folks.
- JG: I’m sure. I don’t know, maybe my parents paid for it, but I’m not aware.
- WN: I guess in the old days, it was probably firewood before kerosene, yeah?
- JG: Yeah.

- WN: In the old days.
- JG: There was an old tofu man that would go around the whole city with his wagon, ring his bell. We would buy tofu from him.
- WN: Like what kind of wagon was it?
- JG: Wooden and kind of enclosed because when he opened the lid to pick out the tofu, it was still steaming. So it was a heavy, solid lid to keep the tofu. Freshly made, yeah?
- WN: So he would have the tofu in these bins or whatever?
- JG: Yeah, we would bring a dish. He'd scoop one out and put it in our dish to take home. He would just—like a vendor. You know, like an ice cream vendor. Just stop in the middle of a street and everybody would come out. He'd ring his bell—tofu bell.
- WN: And he was driving—it was a truck? Was it a truck or . . .
- JG: No, wagon.
- WN: When you say, "Wagon," what do you mean?
- JG: Push the wagon. Wooden wagon.
- WN: And how many tofu do you think he could carry at one time?
- JG: I think [the wagon] was about the size of this table.
- WN: So about three-feet long, two-feet wide.
- JG: Because, you know, not everybody bought. So he would have to go around the blocks. Of course, the city was way smaller at that time. Then, he would have to go back and replenish, I guess, his wagon. Or maybe he just made that much.
- WN: And you said it was steaming? So was it already hot from where he got it, or was there some kind of fire underneath?
- JG: I don't know what he did. He could have had a wood burning thing. I don't know how he did it, but I remember steam coming out.
- WN: Do you remember his name?
- JG: No. Tofu man.
- WN: (Laughs) Now, besides the tofu man, what else do you remember in terms of people coming to sell things?
- JG: To sell things around? No, I don't remember.
- WN: What about fish?

- JG: No. At that time, nobody had cars. If they went fishing, they would walk to the shore or wherever. Maybe they sold fish but not in my neighborhood.
- WN: In terms of, like, the stores, did you folks go to the store? Or did they come to you?
- JG: Oh no, we had to go. During the war [World War II], pork and eggs—certain items were shipped over. No, I take that back. I'm not sure. But they were rationed. So every Tuesday, I remember, every Tuesday, we had to go to the store, line up for our share of pork.
- WN: Wow. And which store was this?
- JG: It was Okamoto Store. It was wrapped in this pink butcher paper. My mother would cut it up in pieces so it would last.
- WN: So you don't remember the stores coming and taking orders?
- JG: No, no such service. (WN chuckles.) No.
- WN: Your father being a *luna*, did the *lunas* live in houses that were, maybe, a little bigger than maybe the workers' houses?
- JG: I don't know if that was why. Probably, single men lived in some bigger homes, too, but they were all divided up. You had only one bedroom. They had boarding houses where there were chefs in each boarding house to cook for all the single men around that district. They would go there to eat. I remember delivering laundry to all the single Korean men. They had only one bedroom each.
- WN: So tell me about this laundry. I know you helped your mother. Your mother did laundry for these bachelors. What was that like? What was the routine?
- JG: Every Saturday, we'd go pick up the dirty laundry.
- WN: From individuals?
- JG: Individuals. Some, you had to go take off the [bed] sheets too. But not every week. They would say, "No need." When you do pick it up, it's smelly, and it's kind of brown. I remember those things. I can still picture them. But being single Korean men, I know they didn't take a bath every day. My father didn't because they would bathe in the river in Korea. Wintertime, it was so cold. My father would come home and just sponge himself off. We had public baths at that time. The whole neighborhood shared one public bath. Public toilet, too! Oh, I hated that.
- WN: (Chuckles) Okay, before we get to that, again, tell me about the laundry. Every Saturday, you guys would . . .
- JG: (Laughs) Oh, I wandered off.
- WN: No, no, no, that's okay. That's okay.
- JG: Okay.
- WN: I'll ask you about the bath later. (Chuckles)

- JG: It seems like there were about three ladies in our neighborhood that took laundry from the single men. There were a lot of Korean single men. They all came here to work. My mother would get up like two o'clock in the morning to start ironing. Then, she'd cook our lunch to take out to the fields. I remember when I'd say, "Bye, Ma. I'm going," she's back at her ironing. I thought, oh, why is she ironing all those working clothes? Now, definitely—you don't even iron the clothes you wear out now. (WN chuckles.) But oh, that was a lot of hard work.
- WN: So even work clothes, she ironed? So when you took in the dirty laundry on Saturdays, okay, where did you folks do the laundry?
- JG: [There were] community laundry houses. One in [each] district. There were four cement tubs—four back to back. We used one with a wood plank to scrub.
- WN: Oh, the washboard.
- JG: There was a washboard, but we had the plank—a smooth board to scrub the initial dirt. Then rinse off, boil it, then rinse off, then rinse off, squeeze by hand.
- WN: So you'd wash first with the wooden plank and the soap?
- JG: On the wooden plank, yeah, and scrub.
- WN: Okay, this is in the basin?
- JG: In a tub, yeah.
- WN: A tub. Okay. And then, you said boil.
- JG: You know, you don't boil it right away because the water gets too filthy. You cannot change the water all the time. You know, the hot water. So it kind of takes off the initial dirt. Then you boil it.
- WN: And how would you boil it?
- JG: In, like, an old barbecue pit, I would call it. You stuck wood underneath, and there were iron racks to hold the big *plangana*. You know what a *plangana* is? The tub—is it wooden? No.
- WN: It's like a metal tub?
- JG: Yeah, yeah, yeah. We call it *plangana*. Big one.
- WN: *Plangana*? Oh, I think—I thought . . .
- JG: That's the Filipino word for that.
- WN: Because Japanese word, I think, is *tarai*?
- JG: Oh, *tarai*.
- WN: Anyway, *plangana*.
- JG: Boil it.

- WN: You put the clothes that you had already scrubbed.
- JG: Pre-scrubbed.
- WN: Pre-scrubbed, put it in the . . .
- JG: Boil it, boil it.
- WN: And how long would you boil it?
- JG: I don't know. I guess it depends on how dirty. My mother would say, "Okay, take it out now." We had a big paddle to scoop it up into another bucket, carry that bucket of wet clothes into the laundry room. Because the fire was outside. We burned wood for that. Then, after everything was done, the wood became charcoal and ashes. And we would roast potatoes.
- WN: You just put the potato into the . . .
- JG: Underneath and cover it up with all the hot ashes.
- WN: I bet you can taste it right now, huh? (Chuckles)
- JG: No, it didn't taste that good. But at that time, it must've been good. You know, just something different. Then rinse off. And we had a lot of clotheslines alongside the washhouse to hang up all the laundry.
- WN: When you boiled the clothes, was there soap in there or was it all just regular, plain water?
- JG: I think, there must've been soap. Because after coming out of the boiling water, we had to rinse it out two or three times and then it's ready to hang out to dry. I don't remember the water being sudsy but there must've been soap in there. You're kind of frugal about that. I suppose we used shaved soap. I didn't do any shaving but, you know, not flakes or liquid soap like now.
- WN: And then, you would squeeze it out by hand? Wring it out.
- JG: A lot of work.
- WN: And this is not regular clothes. I mean, you're talking about work clothes, yeah? Pineapple field work clothes.
- JG: Work clothes.
- WN: Must've gotten pretty dirty.
- JG: Dirty, yeah. Being single men, too, they would use it the whole week. Two or three.
- WN: Now, is this mainly denim—jeans? Blue jeans kind . . .
- JG: I don't know what—khaki or—I don't know what kind. But when we delivered the clean laundry back to them, I remember a wagon about this size.
- WN: Three feet . . .

- JG: There were like three or four different sets to deliver to the four different men. And their stack was only about like that. You know, so maybe jeans, shirt . . .
- WN: About a foot high.
- JG: Not a full week's laundry like we have nowadays.
- WN: And was it folded and . . .
- JG: Pressed.
- WN: Pressed and folded. Was there starch, too?
- JG: Oh yeah. (Laughs) We had to make starch. We had to boil the starch at home and bring the hot pot down to the washhouse, starch certain clothes. The work clothes you starch because it kind of repels the dirt. It doesn't absorb so much. Pillowcases. Sheets, too, you know, we starched.
- WN: And when would you starch it, is that after you folks scrub it?
- JG: Before you hang it out. Make a big pot of starch. It's thick, thick starch. So you use maybe a portion in a bucket—a portion with water to thin it out. And then, starch the pillowcases, the sheets too. The sheets were made out of rice bags. We starch it to prolong its use.
- WN: How did they make sheets out of rice bags? I mean, they sewed them together?
- JG: Yeah, you can feel the stitches. Spread out the rice bag and stitch.
- WN: Wow.
- JG: I have some old rice bags.
- WN: Oh yeah?
- JG: Yeah, with the brands on. (WN chuckles.) It wasn't ours, but this old lady who died years ago had a whole collection. Her son gave me with the old, old brand names. You want to see it?
- WN: (Chuckles) Maybe later.
- JG: Amazing. I'm such a sentimentalist. I cannot just use it for rag or anything. It's a relic, you know. These old names—some, I don't even recognize the bag brand names.
- WN: So Saturday, you would pick up the dirty laundry. What day of the week would you return the laundry? That batch.
- JG: Monday or Tuesday. I'm not sure when. Or the following week. You return the clean laundry and you take the dirty. I think that's what it was.
- WN: Oh, so Saturday, you pick up and drop off. And then, you said there were four bachelors that your mother washed for?
- JG: No, more than that. But we delivered like four at a time, depending on where they lived.

- WN: Oh, I see. And through all of this process, what was your main job?
- JG: To take care of my two younger brothers and the house and help my mother with the laundry.
- WN: I mean, with the laundry, what was your main job?
- JG: Rinsing and taking out the hot clothes from the *plangana* and hanging up the laundry. Then, picking them up when they're dry.
- WN: And whose job was it to iron?
- JG: Mainly my mother.
- WN: And what was the iron like? What kind of iron was this that she used?
- JG: You know, I picture our iron with a cord—that was a later time. But before that, it was a—I don't know if hot brick or how the iron got heated up.
- WN: You mean, it was like a brick on the bottom with a handle?
- JG: Yeah, it was heated. I don't know how it got heated up. But the iron was so heavy and cumbersome. The wooden handle was right on the top, and you had to just do this.
- WN: Oh, boy. That's some job.
- JG: Hard job. No ironing boards. She had a table. It was padded to put the clothes on to iron.
- WN: And when you folks dropped off the clean laundry, is that when you folks collected the money from them?
- JG: I don't remember collecting the money. I don't know how they paid my mother. Probably my brothers went around because I was so young.
- In fact, I'll tell you this. (Chuckles) I don't know if you want to—but there was one dirty, old man. Once in a while, he would give me a nickel. You know, in Korean, "*Kamsahamnida*," thank you. Like that. I gave my mother, and my mother didn't say anything. Then, one time, he called me into his room. He said, "Sit down, sit down." He gave me a quarter. He tell me, "Sit down."
- And I got scared. So I told my mother, and my mother said, "Don't ever go back there." She sent my brother with the laundry after that. Funny how your instincts will tell you.
- And the same man, once, when I was walking with my girlfriend in Honolulu, he was living in this old Korean home for old people by Kalihi side. He would say, "Come, say hello." I was so scared, and I walked away. He's telling me in Korean, "Don't do that. You're being rude." You know. This old Korean, "I'm lonely" and things like that. I can see they were lonely for companionship. That he would try to get something from me. I tell you, you go through a lot of stuff when you're young.
- WN: Yeah. And you were telling me about the public bath. What was that like?
- JG: It was two entrances. Two tubs with a wall—men and women. And there was one person assigned for each bathhouse. They started burning wood early afternoon and would stoke the

wood to heat up all the water. You would try to go take a bath early when the water was clean. Because you know the old ladies? They like to soak in the *furō*, yeah? Oh, if you went late, you would see scum on the water. Honestly. So you tried to go to take a bath early.

WN: So you would scrub outside the tub?

JG: Mm-hmm [yes]. The tub is here, and there's a little bench to put your wash pan and your soap and your towel. You wash yourself and you scoop water . . .

WN: From the tub.

JG: . . . and rinse yourself. And that's how it should be. You know, not have these people go soak themselves.

WN: (Chuckles) How big was the tub?

JG: About this—oh.

(Telephone rings.)

WN: Shall we pause?

JG: Excuse me.

WN: Okay, so we were talking about the public bath, and people would get a little bucket and rinse themselves off. And well, I asked you how big it was, how big the tub was.

JG: Yeah, it was this long.

WN: About four feet.

JG: The hot water tap was here. And wider. End of the table, like this. It was pretty big. There was one Japanese lady that loved the water hot, hot, hot. It's practically smoking—you know, steaming! And she'd go in.

(Laughter)

Funny how you manage to live like that.

WN: Now, I was wondering, at home, did your parents speak Korean?

JG: Mm-hmm [yes].

WN: And what did they speak to you in?

JG: Korean. Maybe a little bit of pidgin Korean. So, you know, actually, when you hear people from Korea talk—my cousin, when he came, I couldn't understand them because they are speaking the correct Korean. They're speaking it correctly. Ours is all half and shortcuts and stuff. So I didn't understand him. My sister did. She was the most learned of all, as far as Korean goes. She could write, and she could speak, and she could read real fast. I would read letter by letter and then try to put it together and try to comprehend what that word meant. So I was bad at it. We had Korean[-language] school, you know.

- WN: Oh yeah, I was going to ask you.
- JG: We had to enhance our Korean language, but I didn't retain much of it. It was so, so long ago. That was a chore to attend to. The teacher was strict, always with the stick. It wasn't enjoyable. They were very strict disciplinarians.
- WN: And where was the Korean[-language] school?
- JG: It was at our church. We had a Korean church. Remember, the Japanese had their Buddhist church?
- WN: The new one? Or the before-the-war one?
- JG: Before. You know where the [Lāna'i] Union Church is?
- WN: Yes.
- JG: That used to be the Japanese [Lāna'i] Hongwanji [Mission].
- WN: Yes, right.
- JG: Somehow, I guess when the war started, they got ousted.
- WN: Right.
- JG: I think that was the time they had to move to a smaller building.
- WN: Right, and then, where was the Korean church?
- JG: On this end. Close to my house. We had a Korean block. We called it the "Up Block," or the "Down Block." All Koreans were within that community. The church was there. We had our [language] school in there. There was a kitchenette—every church at that time had kitchen facilities and room for meetings and stuff.
- WN: Now, was it basically most of the Koreans living in this one area in Lāna'i City or . . .
- JG: Yeah, most of us were there, and there was a smaller group of Koreans we called, "Up Camp." Soon Yi Amaral is from Up Camp.
- WN: So basically, there was almost like a Korean camp then?
- JG: Yeah. They were very close. You know, when your parents come from Korea, they have to band together. The company loaned their company trucks every Sunday so ethnic groups or church groups could take them to the beach and pick them up and bring them back up to the city. It was our entertainment. We'd all go down.
- WN: So this was every Sunday?
- JG: Every Sunday. Every Thanksgiving, they held a picnic and recreation time at the old Dole Park. You know where the service station is now? The [Nishimura] gas service station.
- WN: The one on Lāna'i Avenue?

JG: Yeah, that's the only one we have now.

WN: Right.

JG: And kitty-corner there are housings.

WN: Yes.

JG: Yeah, that used to be the old ballpark where there were baseball games. Every Thanksgiving, they would set up booths and just feed the whole community free, and had games and entertainment. So they provided—they weren't that strict, but as a plantation, they did give us a lot of things where we could manage to live.

WN: Now, in terms of Korean holidays or celebrations, in your camp, did you folks have that?

JG: Yes. The church was very strong and there were very, very few non-Methodists. We had a Korean Methodist Church. Very few Koreans did not belong to the church.

WN: I see. So what kinds of things did the church sponsor?

JG: Oh, New Year's Eve, all the women worked on *mandoo* in the church in the kitchen side. Everybody was invited to eat after six o'clock or so, New Year's Eve. You could eat as much as you want. Our fun thing was we used to eat early, go back and eat some more, and count and see who could eat the most *mandoo* dumplings. I remember that. But they would roll out the dough with long bottles and make the stuffing.

WN: The stuffing was, what, mostly pork?

JG: Pork, *kimchi*, green onion—you could raise in the garden—and tofu. Then, every Sunday after church, you would go home. Each home would have *kook soo* for lunch. You know what *kook soo* is?

WN: Yeah, yeah, the noodles, huh?

JG: Yeah, yeah.

WN: With the beef.

JG: It was a tradition—*kook soo* for lunch.

WN: For New Year's.

JG: No, every Sunday after church.

WN: Oh, every Sunday. Now, when you said *mandoo* for New Year's, is that a—is *mandoo* like traditional for New Year's?

JG: Yeah.

WN: And every Sunday after church . . .

JG: *Kook soo*.

WN: . . . you'd have *kook soo*. Cold or hot?

JG: Hot. I guess a few times, we had it cold. That's when you have to precook the pork—you know, the broth to cool it and skim it. Too much work. So even after my mother moved to Honolulu, after she died, my sister would make *mandoo* every New Year's. I would go over and help her. But she's very old now. She has—she's starting Alzheimer's. I tried to make *mandoo* every year here for my family because they'd all come home for New Year's.

WN: Right, right. Now, the *mandoo*—was it every family making New Year's time or was it at the church?

JG: No, New Year's Day, all the women got together at the church and make for everybody. It was like an open house.

WN: Were there any other holidays or times of the year that they did something like this?

JG: There was [in] March. It's a Korean Independence Day, I think. There was something, but I don't recall what, maybe a church service. And Christmas, all us kids would have to practice for a Christmas program for the church.

WN: And these programs, were they in English or were they in Korean?

JG: Mostly in Korean but when the children were involved, I think we did it in English because I don't remember acting out, you know, your part in Korean. Maybe some. I'm not sure.

WN: And for church activities, was there like music, dancing, traditional kinds of things? Or was it . . .

JG: Yeah. My mother them did dancing. My father played the drum.

WN: The Korean drum?

JG: Yeah.

WN: Hits with the hands on two sides [of the drum].

JG: You sit down and you. . . .

WN: I see. And of course, you folks as Americans . . .

JG: Americanized.

WN: Americanized. What did you think about all that?

JG: It was hard to stay Korean. You know, when you're living among others, you see that there are different lives. When you were young, you just played within the community, within the camp, and that was all there is. But once you start going to school, it's another world.

WN: Because you're going school with other races?

JG: Yeah. Then, your mind starts to expand, I guess. You know, that isn't all there is. I mean, it's natural with everybody. Even like my grandchildren that live on Lāna'i, they think it's great, but they accept it because that's all there is. But when they go out, it's a whole different world.

WN: So you would go to regular school at Lāna‘i [High and Elementary] School, yeah. And then, after school, you would walk to the church for Korean[-language] school?

JG: I think Korean school was maybe twice a week in the afternoon. That was it. I don't know for how long each week, but I didn't like it.

WN: (Laughs) You liked regular school better?

JG: Oh yeah, more freedom. That Korean school was so—he was a martinet, do you know? “Do what I tell you. Learn. Write.” If you're not interested, you cannot. I remember he taught all different grades together because we weren't that big of a class. One boy started answering him back, and he was going with the stick to him. He jumped out of the window, and it was a pretty long jump. (Chuckles) I remember that. I forget his name.

WN: (Laughs) But he lived?

JG: I don't think he ever went back to school.

(Laughter)

WN: Now, you said there were a lot of Korean bachelors that your mom did laundry for. But it seems like there were Korean couples that had children, you know, people like your parents so that the children go to Korean school.

JG: Around our camp, there were very few bachelors. They lived outside. Our camp, we had a lot of children. We were all born around the same time. We played a lot together.

WN: So tell me what kinds of things you did to have fun together growing up. What kinds of things did you folks do?

JG: We played marbles, tic-tac-toe, baseball with a stick—not a real bat. We didn't have a real bat. All stuff you make at home.

WN: Were there things that you girls did that the boys didn't do?

JG: No, we played together. I don't know. I never played with dolls. I never had a doll. I don't know if other girls had dolls. But we did not go to each other's house to play. We played mostly all together with the boys outside. When I think about it, a lot of the homes did not have living rooms. They were either bedrooms or—you know. So they had pretty big families. We always played outside—jump rope. (Chuckles)

WN: And you said on Sundays, you folks would go to the beach.

JG: Most Sundays. Maybe once a week, the mothers would make lunches and the truck would come pick us up at a certain time.

WN: You had to do a lot of babysitting, yeah?

JG: Well, I took care of my youngest brother from the time he was born. Well, no, take that away. He was in the hospital for almost a year. He had some kind of stomach ailment.

WN: This is Harry?

- JG: Harry. But after he came home, my mother was already doing laundry, so I had the responsibility of looking after him. So that's how I got into babysitting, I think, for other people.
- WN: Oh, okay. I'll ask you about that later. Now, did your father pretty much have weekends open? I mean, was he pretty much around on weekends for you folks?
- JG: Oh yeah. He did the yard, took care of the chickens. Like nowadays, the men go here and there. I know that there was hunting at that time for other men to go. But the men were usually around.
- WN: Now, you said you folks had chickens.
- JG: We raised chickens for a while.
- WN: That was for eggs?
- JG: For the eggs and for the food. We would have to chop the long-blade grass. I don't know what you call that. Chop it up for the chickens to eat.
- WN: How many chickens do you think you folks had?
- JG: Oh, I'd say maybe eight or ten. I don't know.
- WN: And were they in coops?
- JG: Yeah.
- WN: They laid their eggs in the coop?
- JG: Of course, they used chicken doo-doo for fertilizer for the plants.
- WN: Besides chickens, what else did you folks have, if anything?
- JG: That was all.
- WN: So you got all your eggs from the chickens?
- JG: If we had. Once in a while, I guess we bought. I don't know the money part. I'm surprised how my mother managed because my father's pension was like thirty, forty dollars a month to feed all of us. And you have to pay the house rent. Well, I think there was house rent. I don't know, as I said. I just know my mother had to take in laundry to supplement.
- WN: What about garden?
- JG: Yeah, we had vegetable garden. Raised a lot of stuff.
- WN: Like what, do you remember?
- JG: Cabbage. Head cabbage. We had green beans, sweet potato, carrots. Maybe we did have *won bok* to make *kimchi*. I'm not sure.
- WN: Did you help your mom cooking at all?

JG: Not early part. Not much really. She left—was it before I finished high school?

WN: Well, you said that you were nineteen . . .

JG: Nineteen.

WN: . . . when she went to Honolulu to work—to live in Kalihi.

JG: Yeah, about nineteen.

WN: So about 1952 or so, after you graduated from high school.

JG: Yeah, I did. My father was already sickly. He had bad, bad asthma. You know, he couldn't breathe good all the time. The doctor had, before that, told him no more drinking but he could only drink wine. So he guzzled the wine. Only my mother went to Honolulu. My father stayed with me, and my three brothers stayed with me.

So I was left with the chores. My mother would work weekdays at the *kimchi* factory. My older brother worked here for the [Hawaiian Pineapple] Company for a couple years, then he left. My father would only eat liquid stuff. Soup—bone and pig feet that I made soup out of. But he needed his wine. Then my brother David graduated and he joined the [military] service right away.

WN: So during that time that your mother was in Honolulu, you were like the mother?

JG: Yeah.

WN: Now, when you were going to Lānaʻi [High and Elementary] School, what was that like? What were your favorite subjects in school?

JG: I don't know about favorite. I just went to school because I had to go to school. I don't know if I had a favorite subject, but I liked it.

WN: So you liked it better than Korean[-language] school?

JG: Of course, yeah. I really enjoyed cafeteria meals, you know, because it was so different. I liked it that—to me, they were well-balanced. Although we ate in—you know, pie plates?

WN: Yeah.

JG: Our food was all slopped together in pie plates. You had spaghetti, then a vegetable, and maybe prunes—all together in one plate. (WN chuckles.) For recess, we had cocoa or juice. Cocoa in those aluminum cups. So when you go to your cafeteria duty—you know, if you rotate—you had to wash all those dishes. Not like now.

WN: So you would get off one day school, yeah, and then work in the cafeteria all day.

JG: I didn't mind that. It was a change. I looked forward to school because it was different. The environment is different.

WN: Were you involved in any kind of extracurricular activities in school?

JG: Not much, not much. I had to go home and work, but there weren't that many—that much going on. I remember I joined the volleyball team when I was like seventh grade. This older girl who lived by our house—she was a Filipino girl—I would go to her house and wait for her. She was already a junior or senior. But I looked forward to, you know, these older people. We would walk to the gym for volleyball practice. This one time, she gave me a Milk Nickel. You know what a Milk Nickel is?

WN: Mm-hmm [yes].

JG: [Ice cream] on the stick. That was the greatest treat. I never, never had one. Even ice cream, you know. I thought, oh, these guys are so rich! That was the biggest treat. Boy, I couldn't—even now, I can't get over it.

WN: (Chuckles) Yeah, I guess Milk Nickel would've tasted really good at that time.

JG: Yeah, a real treat. That's why, now, I like Häagen-Dazs. On the stick! My kids say, "Ho, that's too expensive!"

I'd say, "I don't care." (WN laughs.) Of course, I couldn't play good. They never called me to the court. (Laughs) I had never played sports. They didn't have sports for women. Oh, then I joined the Girl Scouts. I didn't join the Brownies.

WN: Did Lānaʻi have only one Girl Scout program?

JG: True.

WN: True.

JG: We had Girl Scouts when you could find a leader. Most of the time, it was wives of these plantation big shots that do those things because locals don't know that much about it. You know, in our generation—I mean, even our parents don't know how to be Girl Scout leaders. A lot of the *haoles* wives did community work. One taught tap dancing, one did 4-H.

WN: This was in conjunction with the school or totally separate?

JG: Outside. Oh, extracurricular regarding the school—no, I don't recall doing anything.

WN: And you said, also, you worked as a babysitter? Can you tell me about that?

JG: Babysitter for what we called *haoles*. You know, they all used to live on the hill. Whenever they go out—they always used to socialize with each other. They wanted babysitters—or I would help in the kitchen if they're having a dinner, and I would clean up the kitchen afterwards. I would clean their house too. Clean, scrub their tubs.

WN: How did you find out about these jobs were available?

JG: The teachers would announce if somebody wants something, and I know I would always volunteer. Raise my hand. I even did ironing for a couple of teachers.

WN: So, what, after school, you would walk to their house?

JG: No, they generally picked me up. Yeah, I did a lot of work for *haoles*.

- WN: Did you cook at all?
- JG: Not for them.
- WN: And did they pay you cash?
- JG: Mm-hmm [yes]. And they would bring me home.
- WN: So these were like the bosses or the upper management of the plantation [and schoolteachers]?
- JG: Yeah.
- WN: So of all those jobs that you did, like cleaning up after parties, cleaning house, babysitting—what did you like the best?
- JG: The money, I guess. (WN laughs.) You know, and I'd be so proud to give it to my mother. But now, I think back, it was a learning experience. I learned how other people lived, and I got tips from how to manage things.
- WN: I talked to some people, and they said they learned how to set tables with the knives and the forks and things like that.
- JG: We had home economics class, which I really feel the school should teach. The girls did home ec[onomics] and the boys took agriculture. That's why now, when the family comes for dinner, I will set the table. They just grab any utensil, and they don't put the napkin on their laps and stuff because they never learned that. (WN chuckles.) But I like for them to learn it for when they go out, you know, to eat outside. Life is so different now.
- WN: Now how were your relations with these families that you worked for? Was it pretty good?
- JG: I don't know. I guess pretty good because they called me all the time because I have always—I learned from my parents, I guess, whatever you do, you do the best you can. If not, you don't do it at all. If you say you're doing something, you have to commit. That is my belief. That's what I try to teach my grandchildren too. Like, you join the baseball team, you have to commit. So you think about it first. But this one, HPU [Hawai'i Pacific University], my grandson—he quit early.
- WN: Oh, HPU baseball?
- JG: Yeah, you know, at HPU . . .
- WN: In Honolulu?
- JG: Because the schedule was so rigid. He's taking full courses at HPU. This is his first year, and he tried out for baseball because he likes baseball. He made the team, but they practice at Ke'ehi Lagoon [Park] three days a week. Saturday, all day. Sometimes Sunday. They have fitness three days a week, six o'clock in the morning. He just couldn't manage everything because he lived with my oldest daughter there. She would have to drive him to practice from—where's that, Kaimukī? All the way. And go pick him up.
- WN: Yeah, that's commitment. Not just for him but for your daughter. (Chuckles)

JG: Yeah, it was hard. So my—their mother and father here sent their car over to him in Honolulu, but he was finding out, too, the cost of a car plus going to school. So as far as this goes, Tammy said, “You should’ve quit before I ordered all these t-shirts!”

(Laughter)

You know, they had money-making projects. They sell t-shirts.

WN: Right. HPU baseball, I see.

JG: Yeah.

WN: (Chuckles) Now, you talked about Nob Hill. What was Nob Hill like?

JG: Purely the upper elite. We used to call it, “Snob Hill,” because they were in a class of their own. I can’t think of any local that was able to live up there until after a while.

WN: And how long did you go to Korean school?

JG: Not too long. Our *moksa*—you know, our teacher died. He was also the priest for the church.

WN: And to what extent did you play or hang around with other ethnic groups besides Koreans? I mean, you said you had a Filipino friend who was older than you.

JG: She was living close to us. But in school, I had a lot of Japanese [friends]. I don’t know about Chinese. They were so few. Well, Ronald Ching was Chinese, but I didn’t know him well enough. Mostly Japanese.

WN: And as far as religion is concerned, you know, you folks were with the Methodist church. Were your parents—would you consider them to be fairly religious? How about you?

JG: I am in my heart. I don’t go to church. I don’t openly show my religion, but I have God and Jesus in my heart. I feel that’s all I need because, oh, I hear my friends, they talk about their other friends, what they wore in church, and how they flaunt—just how they look. You don’t go to church to look good or to impress anybody. You go for your own feelings. That’s how I feel. You don’t need to prove to anybody anything. So I will give to my church annual contributions or—like when my brother died, he had his service in the Catholic church, so I gave the Catholic church something because his wife was a Catholic. But I’m not a certified member of any church.

WN: And you said you had Japanese friends. And I know, your generation, it was very much open . . .

JG: All mixed, yeah.

WN: . . . at that time. I was just wondering, your parents’ generation, were there any kind of conflicts with Japanese, for example, or anything like that?

JG: As far as I can see, we had a big enough community where they just survived and were sociable among each other. I can’t recall that they would get together with others. They would play cards in their spare time. *Hanafuda*. We called it, *hwatu*. Or go talk story.

WN: *Hwatu*, is that the same as *hanafuda*?

JG: *Hanafuda*.

WN: The same game?

JG: Yeah.

WN: Oh.

JG: So I teach my granddaughter that. (WN chuckles.) So when she makes *yaku*.

WN: Yeah.

JG: You know, *yaku*—is that a—Japanese, yeah? *Yaku*.

WN: The word *yaku*, I think, is Japanese.

JG: Yeah, yeah. I say, “Oh, *yang-tah!*” *Yang-tah* means “terrific”. So she says that too (chuckles) when—*yang-tah*—she makes *yaku*. Very [little] Korean I know.

WN: Now, you graduated from Lāna‘i High [and Elementary] School in 1951? Okay, that was the same year of this big strike on Lāna‘i. What do you remember about that strike?

JG: Nobody worked and there were pickets, and the union served lunch and meals to the strikers. It was at the union hall across Pete [Pedro] de la Cruz’s store.

WN: Oh, International [Food and Clothing Center]?

JG: International, yeah. They cooked lunches. It didn’t affect me too much, I think, because my father was already not working. So we didn’t have to like tighten our strings, you know, be more frugal or anything. To me, life just went on.

WN: So your father was already not working in 1951.

JG: The time it affected me was—you know, in school you buy class rings. Did I mention that?

WN: Yeah, yeah, but tell me.

JG: Oh, it was a tradition. You know, you buy your school annual and your class ring and you have to pay for your cap and gown and stuff. And our senior advisor at that time said, “No class rings.”

Everybody went, “Aw!” They wanted, you know. Tradition. They needed one. But inside, I was feeling happy because I knew we couldn’t afford it. I was wondering, how can I get one? Because I didn’t want to be the one not getting one.

So when he said, “No, absolutely no. Your parents are all struggling.” So he crossed that off the list. And I was relieved.

WN: So it was because of the strike going on. No one was working so the teacher decided to not get class rings for that reason—the strike?

JG: Yeah. And afterwards I thought about it, it was good. He stuck up for his belief and that was the right thing to do. I told him I’m glad.

- WN: Well, that's an interesting story because when people ask about how the '51 strike affected Lānaʻi and how it affected individuals, they have their own stories. But yours is, you know, very—from a schoolgirl's perspective.
- JG: Yeah. And I don't think we had cap and gown either. At that time, you didn't need a cap and gown. I don't recall. They were not important to me.
- WN: Do you remember anything—like any changes that were taking place because of the strike? Were there animosities or anything like that?
- JG: Probably but nobody spoke out. I'm sure there were.
- WN: Did your father ever say anything about what his opinion on the strike was?
- JG: By then, he wasn't talking much. He was just in his room.
- WN: And you know, your mother did laundry for the Filipino bachelors—I mean, I'm sorry, Korean bachelors. Was she still doing that in 1951?
- JG: No, no. My brothers, my sister in Honolulu, they were all working and they were sending money, so she didn't have to do laundry by then.
- WN: Oh, I see.
- JG: She was something though. She was, I guess, intelligent. Her brother in Korea was a professor at the University of Seoul, and he had written a couple of books. His son used to work in some kind of government position. He would stop over in Honolulu on his way to the Mainland or someplace. My mother, I think, was smart, too, because one time, she made a custard pie. She cannot read English. I don't know how. She must've listened to a Korean program on the radio and memorized the things you need. She used the kerosene stove and she brought the oven from under the stove, put it on, and she made a pie. That was the most delicious pie. The first time! I was amazed. I still am. But she was smart because after she moved to Honolulu, she learned the Pledge of Allegiance and she listened to Channel 2—Joe Moore—steady and just paid attention. She did the Pledge of Allegiance when she got her citizenship.
- WN: Oh.
- JG: Yeah.
- WN: Oh, she got naturalized, then.
- JG: Yeah, naturalized.
- WN: Did your father ever get naturalized?
- JG: No. We didn't have social security at that time because the government did not recognize [employees in] the field of agriculture as being eligible. So that's why we were so poor, I think. He had only that Dole pension.
- WN: Oh, so no social security.
- JG: No.

WN: So that's one of the reasons why your mother went to Honolulu [to work]—to get social security.

JG: Yeah.

WN: I see.

JG: That's the reason, too, my mother took laundry.

WN: So when you graduated in 1951, what happened after that?

JG: After that, I moved to Honolulu. My mother was still here.

WN: Your mother was still on Lānaʻi?

JG: Still here on Lānaʻi. I worked. I lived with my sister, and I was working for Credit Bureau of Hawaiʻi for a couple of months. Then, I heard Johnny was coming back [to Lānaʻi] from [military] service.

WN: This was your . . .

JG: My husband.

WN: Your boyfriend [then].

JG: My boyfriend at that time. No, we had quit. We weren't going together. But he was coming back, so I quit work in Honolulu and came back.

WN: So Johnny, you knew him in high school?

JG: High school.

WN: So he went in the service?

JG: Got out of the service, came back, then I worked at the post office.

WN: Here on Lānaʻi?

JG: Lānaʻi.

WN: What did you do?

JG: Regular clerk.

WN: So this was about 1952 or so, yeah?

JG: Yeah.

WN: You were a clerk in the post office. So you came back to Lānaʻi . . .

JG: Because of Johnny.

WN: . . .because Johnny was coming back. (Chuckles)

JG: Yeah.

WN: That's true love.

JG: True love. Until now, true love. I worked at various jobs. Then, my mother moved to Honolulu. That's right.

WN: Oh, okay.

JG: I'm getting the sequence right.

WN: You were eighteen when you graduated from high school, went Honolulu for a little while, came back. By nineteen, your mother . . .

JG: Nineteen. Yeah.

WN: So you were like a mother for a while.

JG: Yeah, then my mother moved to Honolulu. So I took care of them. Then, we got married in 1954. In 1955—Johnny worked in the pineapple fields in the beginning.

WN: Oh, before he worked for Hawaiian Air[lines]?

JG: At odd jobs, yeah. He worked for the [Lānaʻi Community] Welfare Association. He managed the pool hall and the bowling alley.

WN: Tell me about his background in terms of his family.

JG: His family ran the tailor shop—the dry cleaning shop. He had lived in the Philippines for about three years when he was a youngster. There were three boys and one girl in the family. They all went to the Philippines for a vacation when he was like three or four. His [father] first had a tailor shop in Lahaina. He left it to his friend to manage. Then he heard that guy was fleecing him. So he had to come back right away. He left [his wife] and the kids in the Philippines. And his company in Lahaina went bankrupt. He had to work and try to save up again for three years until he could bring his family back to Hawai'i. So Johnny talked about seeing snakes and stuff, you know, in the Philippines.

WN: This is the Ilocos? He's Ilocano?

JG: Yeah, he's Ilocano.

WN: Okay.

JG: Then they came back and they moved to Lānaʻi and they opened up the tailor shop.

WN: Which is where Blue Ginger [Café] is now.

JG: Yeah.

WN: (Chuckles) Okay.

JG: So [Johnny's father] worked really hard. Nice, nice couple. Everybody speaks so well of them. He was very, I guess, educated and they just mind their own business. Nice to everybody. That's how Johnny was.

WN: Did Johnny work in the tailor shop?

JG: He would go help. Grandpa always told Johnny, "Take the shop when I retire."

Johnny said, "No," because his two brothers had moved out already. So Grandpa ran the shop till he was almost in his eighties. Then he finally closed up, and they moved to Honolulu. But Johnny worked in the fields. He worked—well, he was a movie projectionist and—he worked at a lot of odd jobs.

Then, in 1955, I was pregnant. Lee Anne was born the following year. I had just gotten pregnant, and Johnny worked for Hawaiian Air as a baggage boy. Then he found a better position with Hawaiian Air in Honolulu because we talked about moving to Honolulu. But my father was getting very sick. So I stayed home with my two brothers. By then, the oldest one had left. Two brothers. And took care of them and my father. Then the following year, was it 1957? My father got so sick, he had to be hospitalized. He was in the hospital for three months. Johnny was working in Honolulu. But right after my father died, we moved.

WN: To Honolulu?

JG: Because that's what I was waiting for. You know, I just couldn't leave my father.

WN: Yeah.

JG: So then, we went to Honolulu.

WN: Where did you live in Honolulu?

JG: Dole Street.

WN: Oh, Wahiawā?

JG: No, Dole. By Punahou.

WN: Oh, Dole Street. Oh, okay.

JG: Yeah. Grandpa then owned two homes in one lot over there. Homes were cheap that time. I'm so glad he did.

WN: And so for how long did you live there?

JG: For only about six months.

WN: And Johnny was working Hawaiian Air?

JG: Hawaiian Air in Honolulu.

WN: Airport?

JG: Yeah. Then, they had offered him the manager's position here on Lānaʻi.

WN: Oh, I see.

JG: I thought, because the kids were getting older. I didn't know how I would manage taking them to school. He was working early in the morning. What school do we go to? You know, I was so green about everything. So yeah, we came back to Lānaʻi. Everything was familiar. He loved his job.

WN: So this is when you started working for the library?

JG: Oh, way after that. When we first moved here, we had lived—you know on the hill?

WN: Mm-hmm [yes].

JG: Being a manager.

WN: Oh.

JG: You know, by then, they were accepting non-*haoles*.

WN: Oh, you mean Nob Hill?

JG: Yeah, yeah, Nob Hill.

WN: Oh, okay.

JG: Not the big houses. It's along that circle of homes. We lived up there because they said, "That's the house you're going to have." But it's so far from the city proper, you know? My daughter was going to start kindergarten. I was worried about her walking to school because Johnny worked like 6:30 in the morning. I never drove. There was this boy who's mentally not well along the path that Lee Anne would take going to school down the hill. I was worried. Nothing would've happened probably, but I was worried about things like that. So I told Johnny, "We should move down to the city, find a place." We were friends with the previous owner here. He was a hunter.

WN: Oh, this house?

JG: Yeah. It was owned by Bernard Tom. Because when he used to come hunting, he stayed with us. When he bought this house, he would bring his friends hunting and stuff here. Before he died, he told his wife, Ethel, sell the house to Johnny. So they did. So that's how we got to move down. School was close by. Everything worked out.

WN: And what year was this—did you come here?

JG: Nineteen fifty-nine? Sixty? Fifty-nine, I think.

WN: One thing I forgot to ask you—if we can back up a little bit—you know, you said that Johnny was a projectionist at the movie theater, and you worked in the theater as well.

WN: What did you do?

JG: Usherette.

WN: Usherette.

JG: Yeah. Shine flashlight on all these people. (WN laughs.) But he was a projectionist because he was working for Lāna‘i Community Welfare Association, which was—take care of the social aspects of the community. So he did the pool hall, the bowling alley, and the theater.

WN: Who was his employer—was it the company?

JG: It was community—County [of Maui].

WN: Community Welfare Association was run by the county? Oh, okay.

JG: County, I think. County position.

WN: Maui County, yeah?

JG: Or it was independent.

WN: I know for a while after that, I think the Tamashiros owned the bowling alley and the pool hall.

JG: Yeah, way after.

WN: Oh, way after, yeah.

JG: Way after.

WN: Okay, so now, can you explain to me what an usherette does?

JG: Collect the tickets.

WN: Okay.

JG: Sometimes, I had to sell if the ticket seller was sick. Collect tickets and see that the kids are seated. You know, just maintain order in the theater.

WN: So you sold tickets outside?

JG: There was a booth.

WN: A booth outside?

JG: Right outside.

WN: And then you had to go in and make sure everybody's seated?

JG: Yeah, I collect the tickets before they can go in.

WN: (Chuckles) Okay. And if someone came late when it's dark, you shine the flashlight?

JG: Yeah, I have to show them a seat. But there was a deadline when you can come in. After like twenty minutes, you just lock the door. I remember that. Before the movie's over, you unlock the

back exit doors—unbar them. And just make a fast run-through to see if anybody forgot anything before you close up.

WN: So you had only one show?

JG: Sometimes two, you know. There was no TV at that time. But the shows were always cartoon. You start with a cartoon and then Time Marches On [i.e. *The March of Time*—that's the news.

WN: The news. Mm-hmm [yes].

JG: And then, probably something small—if the main feature was short, they showed something else in between. But every Tuesday, there were cowboy shows. Thursdays, there were Japanese movies. I forget the other days. Oh, on Sundays, there were matinees and an evening show.

WN: I see.

JG: Yeah, I got to see all the movies free.

WN: And what did you wear?

JG: I had black slacks, a white top, and a red sash.

WN: Yeah, back in those days, the ushers looked nice.

JG: Yeah. I liked it that there was a uniform because it's hard to decide, "What should I wear today?" (WN chuckles.) Even at the library, you know, you have to be comfortable because you're setting up books and stuff, carrying heavy stuff. Finally, I told my coworkers, what do you think about getting a smock? You know, and it kept you from getting too dirty, too. They all agreed, so I liked having a smock over my clothes. You don't have to worry about—oh, you have to tuck in your blouse all the time.

WN: So at the library, do you know when you started at the library? I know you retired in 1993. Were you living in this home by then?

JG: Yeah. Lee Anne was born 1955—'59, '60, '61.

WN: Nineteen sixty-one? Oh, okay.

JG: It was a part-time thing. Dole Corporation paid 35 percent of my time, and Maui County paid 65 percent.

WN: Oh, I see. And when you first started in 1961, what was your job?

JG: Everything. I started blind because this lady from Maui called and said, "You have the job. You can get the key from Dole Corporation office, and you open up, and these are the hours." No training, no orientation, nothing. I open the door, I went in—piles of books that people have borrowed and dropped through the book slot all on the floor. (WN chuckles.) So you know, I had to basically learn from scratch by myself.

WN: So you were the only one in that library? So you had to check out books for them.

- JG: Check out, check in, take care the mail, the periodicals, order books. I didn't know a thing about librarianship. But you know, when you have to do, you do. And then, it was my lifetime job after that.
- WN: So was it always just one—only you in there? Wow.
- JG: Until we moved to the school and joined forces.
- WN: Oh, with the school.
- JG: I was the only one up there. You know, when I had to go use the bathroom—like, I had an emergency or something? I had to call one of my kids, “Hurry up, keep an eye on the library, I have to go home.”
- WN: One of your children had to come over to the library? Wow.
- JG: But it's a small town, so it's not like you're in a big library, you know. You don't—strangers come in.
- WN: Yeah, yeah.
- JG: Nothing like that.
- WN: So where was the original library?
- JG: At the senior center now.
- WN: Oh.
- JG: The building has been changed. They broke down the old one.
- WN: I see.
- JG: Originally, it was a room in the old gym. Doris Hahn used to run that. Then they moved to a place behind the Union Church. Finally, they got the building where the senior center is, and they hadn't had a library for about six months. I thought, okay, Lee Anne was going to school, Bobby was ready for—no, Bobby was going to school. (Laughs) I don't know! (WN chuckles.) Bobby. . . .
- WN: Who's Bobby?
- JG: My second daughter.
- WN: Oh, your second—oh, Bobby! Okay.
- JG: I don't know if she was going to Grandpa's shop when I worked.
- WN: How did you get the job?
- JG: I applied. I don't recall what I did. But I guess because it was vacant for so long, they were desperate.

WN: Oh, so when you first started, it was 35 percent under the [Dole] Company, 65 percent under the county, but eventually, it became under the state?

JG: Maui County. Dole gave everything. We had to keep all the Dole—I don't know if you call them documents but important books there too. Dole had tomes. You know, big, big volumes of *Life* magazines from the beginning. They were booked together. It took up a whole shelf—a whole wall. Each one was really heavy but those were precious, yeah?

WN: Are they still there?

JG: I don't know who has it now. Maui County, probably in a depository or something.

WN: So today, that library is under the school.

JG: School and public. It's a combination.

WN: Oh, so it's actually—it's a state library system, yeah?

JG: State.

WN: So your retirement is . . .

JG: State.

WN: Comes from state. I see.

JG: State and county, they're kind of the same, yeah?

WN: Okay. And you said you had a part-time job at the welfare office?

JG: When we bought this house—when we moved down, I felt I had to work. I was working part-time at the library. I have to take that back. It was 35 percent at the county—at the library—and 15 percent from Dole Corporation.

WN: Oh, okay.

JG: So it wasn't full time. That's right. So I took the part-time job at the welfare office.

WN: I see. So it was 15 percent Dole, 35 percent county, so that's 50 percent. Half-time at the library. And then you worked half-time at the welfare office. And what did you do there?

JG: Take welfare cases.

WN: Wow.

JG: Reports and—my boss only came when he feel like it from Maui. I had to learn everything on my own too.

WN: Were there a lot of welfare recipients on Lānaʻi?

JG: At that time, there was an influx of Filipinos from the Philippines. They were really—this guy who was kind of the greeter for all the Filipinos who came in, he brought them to the welfare

office right away before even going to their home. Because I close at 4:30, he had to make it before that so they would qualify from that day on. He used to make me so mad.

WN: (Chuckles) Now these are Filipinos who weren't working for the company.

JG: They had just arrived.

WN: So this is before they found work for the company?

JG: Yeah. They just came in, therefore they qualify for welfare. So I used to complain to the welfare boss on Maui. I thought—oh, what do you call that?—immigration had a law where the sponsor has to have \$2,000 to provide for the immigrant until they can get settled. He said, "Yeah, they do."

"Well, why don't you guys work together?" The sponsor has to give that guy that money. They don't work together. Immigration and the welfare office never work together. So anybody with \$2,000 can sponsor anybody but not give them the money because your tax is going to pay for their welfare. That was—ho, used to irritate me! They just took advantage of our government.

WN: But eventually, most of them found jobs.

JG: Oh, right away. They were hard workers. But, the welfare law was, you have to provide an iron, an ironing board, washing machine, rice cooker, ice box, stove—all that, which they considered essential for a normal household. So this lady comes in, tells me her iron broke. I don't have to go check it. I'm not supposed to go to their house to check. You just give them the money for a new one. Then she comes in again—her rice cooker broke. You have to give them the money. You take their word for it. It really soured me on welfare. Things like that. Then comes the big stuff—their washing machine broke. I tell, "You can go laundromat."

"Oh, I no more car." And you don't argue, you know. You don't. You just give it to them.

WN: So you retired in 1993 from the library system.

JG: Yeah, uh-huh [yes].

WN: And I was wondering—you know what I forgot to ask you—your pineapple work out in the fields.

JG: How it felt?

WN: Can you tell me what you did as a child, working in the pineapple fields? Then I'll bring you back up to the present time. But I forgot to ask you about that. What kind of work did you do as a schoolgirl working out in the fields?

JG: I worked when I was eleven because there was child labor law. Of course, I was already cleaning *haole* houses, so this work was steady income. You work, you carry your canvas bag, and your lunch, and your bottle of water. Gloves, everything you need. When we had to go picking, you would climb through all the plants to get to the center of the field. You pick the pineapple, you throw it to the next line. And you just . . .

WN: Flip it.

- JG: No, you just hand them over to the next line and the next line, until you come to the first line. Then you try to take off the tops and crate them. So you did it from both sides of the—this is the middle of the line. You bring these out here, and you bring those over there because they were so heavy, yeah?
- WN: You move it to the other line.
- JG: You transfer it to the next line until you come to the first line, right next to the road.
- WN: Right, right, right.
- JG: And there were crates alongside.
- WN: And how many lines were you assigned?
- JG: Cuts. We called them cuts—from this to this. The whole line from road to road, and you assign the cut.
- WN: How big was one cut?
- JG: Maybe from this wall to that.
- WN: So about twenty feet? Thirty feet?
- JG: Yeah.
- WN: Thirty feet.
- JG: So if you caught a field with a lot of ripe pineapples, boy, you work fast, you can earn a lot of money because you get a bonus for the number of crates you crate up.
- WN: So you would have a bag . . .
- JG: A bag to . . .
- WN: . . . to put the pine.
- JG: You can haul them out.
- WN: Okay, you pick the pineapple and you put it in the bag.
- JG: But for me, a lot of times, I would just transfer because the bag was too heavy. Carry the bag and go over the plant.
- WN: To the next line.
- JG: Yeah, we'd fall down all the time because I was small, yeah? My nickname used to be '*Ōpae*—[meaning] "Shrimp". I was so small. (WN chuckles.) Then, your pants would get all wet—your canvas pants, which is a coverall. I refused to wear the rubber pants for a long time. That was so much to carry, and it was expensive. After a while, I did get rubber pants to use in the morning.
- WN: With the dew, huh.

- JG: And then you change to the canvas pants. Then some days, when you go *hō hana*, I liked it because—it depends on your *luna*. “Okay, get what you can. *Hō hana* the road.” All of my friends are working in between the lines, you know.
- WN: You just had to do the dirt road.
- JG: Road and the sides.
- WN: And that’s easier?
- JG: Yeah.
- WN: Because had less weeds on the road?
- JG: Oh yeah, (WN laughs) not that much.
- WN: Because you were ‘*ōpae*?
- JG: Yeah. (WN laughs.) Pity me, yeah.
- WN: So you would carry the pines, you know, in the sack?
- JG: In the sack.
- WN: And in your case, you moved it to the next line and then stepped over.
- JG: Depends on how much pineapple there was.
- WN: I see. And then you mentioned you cut the top off. When do you do that?
- JG: When?
- WN: Yeah.
- JG: When you come to the end of the line and the crates are there, you cut off the top.
- WN: With a knife?
- JG: With a knife. I was so small and weak—I would chop like that. Everybody could just chop right through the tops. I couldn’t.
- WN: One chop?
- JG: Yeah, mine would go like half way, and I have to slice. (Laughs)
- WN: You have to saw it, kind of?
- JG: Oh, hard work.
- WN: So then you would put the pineapple in the crate?
- JG: Pack it up in the crate.

WN: How many pineapples fit in one crate?

JG: About twelve.

WN: Twelve.

JG: Depends on the size, yeah. Then the truck drivers would come and then just pick up your crates and just stack them up in the truck bin to take them to the harbor.

WN: Ah, I see. You got paid by the hour, but you got bonus if you . . .

JG: Crate a lot.

WN: . . . did more crates?

JG: Yeah.

WN: So did that happen to you? Did you get?

JG: I never got enough. (WN laughs.) I always got less. But you know, it was—now that I think about it, I would've complained. But it was just—you do it. It's there, it's a job, you just do it.

WN: So it's actually hourly pay.

JG: Mm-hmm [yes].

WN: And you were in a gang with all females?

JG: Yeah.

WN: And what did you do about the tops?

JG: Just leave them. They just dropped to the—among the plants and we just leave it there.

WN: And that was your primary job, picking the pine and cutting off the tops and crating them. Did you do other things like slipping?

JG: Yeah. You know, after a while, you can, you know. Depends on the pineapple and the top, if they were easy to flip or what. But we flipped a lot when we followed the boom [harvester].

WN: Oh, I see. Flip the top off the pineapple. Oh, so you did that too? With the mechanical [boom harvester] . . .

JG: Mm-hmm [yes], we graduated to a boom. By then, I was taller and older too.

WN: And you didn't have to worry about the crates and cutting off tops. What about picking slips?

JG: No, there were special people that picked up slips.

WN: Oh, I see.

JG: You had to know what kind so they can replant it.

WN: And then, how long did you do that—working in the pineapple field?

JG: Until they stopped hiring for the pineapple.

WN: Still in high school?

JG: And then, pineapple became a year-round crop. Before, summer was a season for it. That's why they had to hire school workers—school students. But when did I stop? Maybe in ninth grade, tenth grade?

WN: Okay.

JG: Because I don't think my younger brother worked in the fields. But all—everybody before worked in the fields.

WN: Right. Okay, well, we're just about finished. I just want to ask you one or two more questions. You know, you went through the pineapple era in Lāna'i. That's where you grew up. And there was the—sort of the [David] Murdock era. And now we're in the—we're just starting the [Larry] Ellison era, you know. What are your thoughts about the history of Lāna'i, and the present of Lāna'i, and the future of Lāna'i? What are your thoughts about what direction Lāna'i is going?

JG: I just accept it because I know you cannot stop progress. As far as [David] Murdock, when he bought the island, I was relieved that somebody did because we were losing the younger population. We elderly would not survive without another business. Pineapple was going out. It was cheaper to raise and produce [pineapple] in the foreign countries. So what future did we have? I just felt, oh, all the elderly are dying, they're moving—youngsters are moving out. Are we going to still have at least the three main stores here? We don't have a theater. We didn't have anything. You know, what, we were going to be a ghost town? When Murdock came in, at least he brought some business—new blood. However much some people didn't like it, you can't stop progress. You know, when you fight about it, you just create animosity. Sometimes, friends are divided about the opinions. I can understand that. But some people are not broadminded, "Oh, I hate her! She's for so-and-so." I don't think that was good.

For one thing, my daughter stayed. I was going to be here by myself after Johnny died. My girls moved out. Tammy, in her senior year, Dole Corporation asked her to work after school at their office in the personnel department. I thought, yeah, that's good. Go, that's good training. You know, you're keeping busy after school. So she did. She learned a lot from that. Now, she knows a lot about union stuff. After school, she learned to interact with the union personnel a lot. I think that was a big factor. So she worked there till—in her senior year until she graduated. Then she moved to Honolulu. She went to UH. And then, the company called her back—if she would like to work fulltime for personnel. Johnny and I were still here. No, Johnny had died already.

WN: Johnny died in . . .

JG: [Nineteen] fifty-eight.

WN: Johnny.

JG: Yeah, [19]58, I think.

WN: No, wait, your father died in [19]58, right?

JG: Oh, excuse me, [19]88.

WN: [Nineteen] eighty-eight.

JG: Yeah. I was here by myself.

WN: Yeah, okay.

JG: Yeah, I was still working at the library.

WN: Okay, so Tammy is your number three?

JG: Number three.

WN: Okay.

JG: So she came back, which made me so happy.

WN: So she's the only one that's here?

JG: Well, see, she was working for the company. And when Murdock bought the island, she was still with the company—she's one of the old-timers for the company, being that she started when she was seventeen. She's still with the original company.

WN: Oh, really? Living on Lānaʻi. Okay.

JG: So she's really *akamai* about the ins and outs of the community, the personnel lives.

So anyway, Murdock, even though he was being drained the expenses of owning this island, we were worried again about what's going to happen. But before that, I told Tammy and Rob—her husband, “You two shouldn't work at the same company. One of you should move maybe to the state or county or something because if the company goes down, you both going down.” It's a good thing Rob is now with the [Department of] Public Works for Maui County. So anyway, things were going bad with Murdock. When [Larry] Ellison came, I'm happy about that because even if—I say, even if—this is only his toy, being that he has billions, he can just play with us. Play with the island, whatever it is bringing new blood again. He is looking at the island in the right way. He wants to help preserve, not ignore it. The way Murdock did it, that angered a lot of people. So to me, Ellison is looking at it as a country person, which I like. He has the money to play with it, but we'll just have to wait and see.

WN: So right now, though, you folks—it seems there's optimism.

JG: Yeah, I'm very satisfied.

WN: Well, you're in your eighties, and you still have your four daughters—and one daughter is living here. And you have grandchildren here. You know, what would you like to see the future for them be like?

JG: It's not so much a success, money-wise, no. I always told them, “You have to be good in your heart.” I never told them, “You pretty or you good-looking.” But you know, with their mixture, they are very attractive, but I always emphasized, “You have to be good in your heart.” You can be successful that way. You have to be content with your life. That's my main thing. If you're

fortunate, you—somebody well-to-do comes along, you're lucky. You're really lucky. But don't take advantage of that. Just live a good life. That's the most I can ask of them. Don't be a bad person.

WN: Well, it seems like that's how you lived your life.

JG: I'm content. I'm lonesome but I'm content with the way my girls have grown up. I don't have any regrets. I had a hard time with all four because while they were teenagers, well, I mean, who hasn't. But I feel, as long as you raise them up the best you can, the rest is up to them. I am very content—I am very happy. I have four wonderful girls. They help me through a lot of my illnesses.

WN: Would you like them to eventually move back here to live?

JG: No, they're content. They're happy. Lee Anne is very happy with John in Honolulu. Bobby is very happy and occupied with all her *mo'opunas* in Kona. It's nice that I can visit them. Especially if Hawaiian Air comes back. Then I have a pass, yeah? Before, like when Keo graduated, everybody came, and the plane fare was horrendous because from Kona, they stop in Honolulu and then come to Lāna'i. There's two different legs you pay for—going and coming—so each person cost almost four hundred dollars.

WN: And because Johnny worked for Hawaiian Air, it would be a lot better for you?

JG: Oh yeah. Much better.

WN: Okay, I'm going to turn it off.

JG: All right.

WN: We're done. So thank you so much. Thank you.

JG: I hope.

WN: Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW

Lāna‘i:

Reflecting on the Past; Bracing for the Future

Center for Oral History
Social Science Research Institute
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